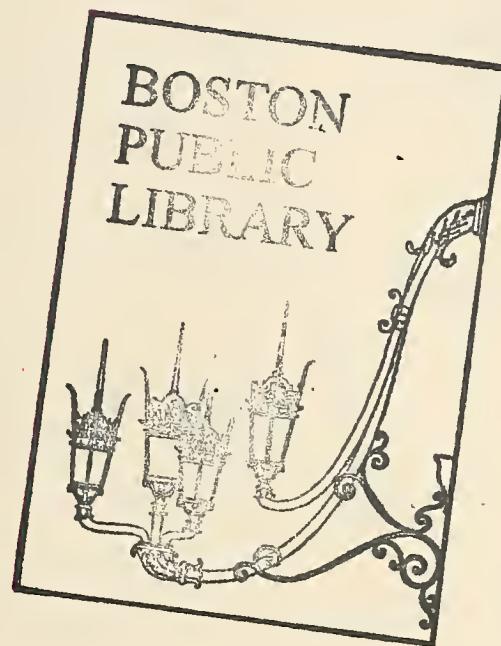


MF 84-213

GOVDOC  
BRA  
4795

# STAFF DRAFT FOR REVIEW ONLY

PRELIMINARY



NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

WEST ROXBURY

OCTOBER 2, 1974

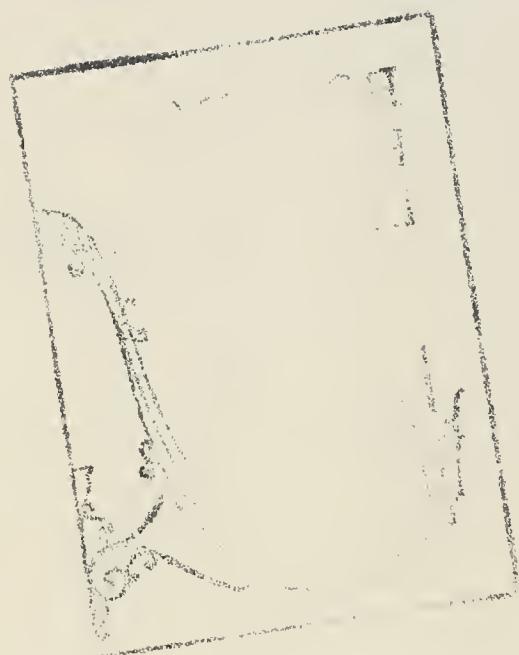
Boston Redevelopment Authority

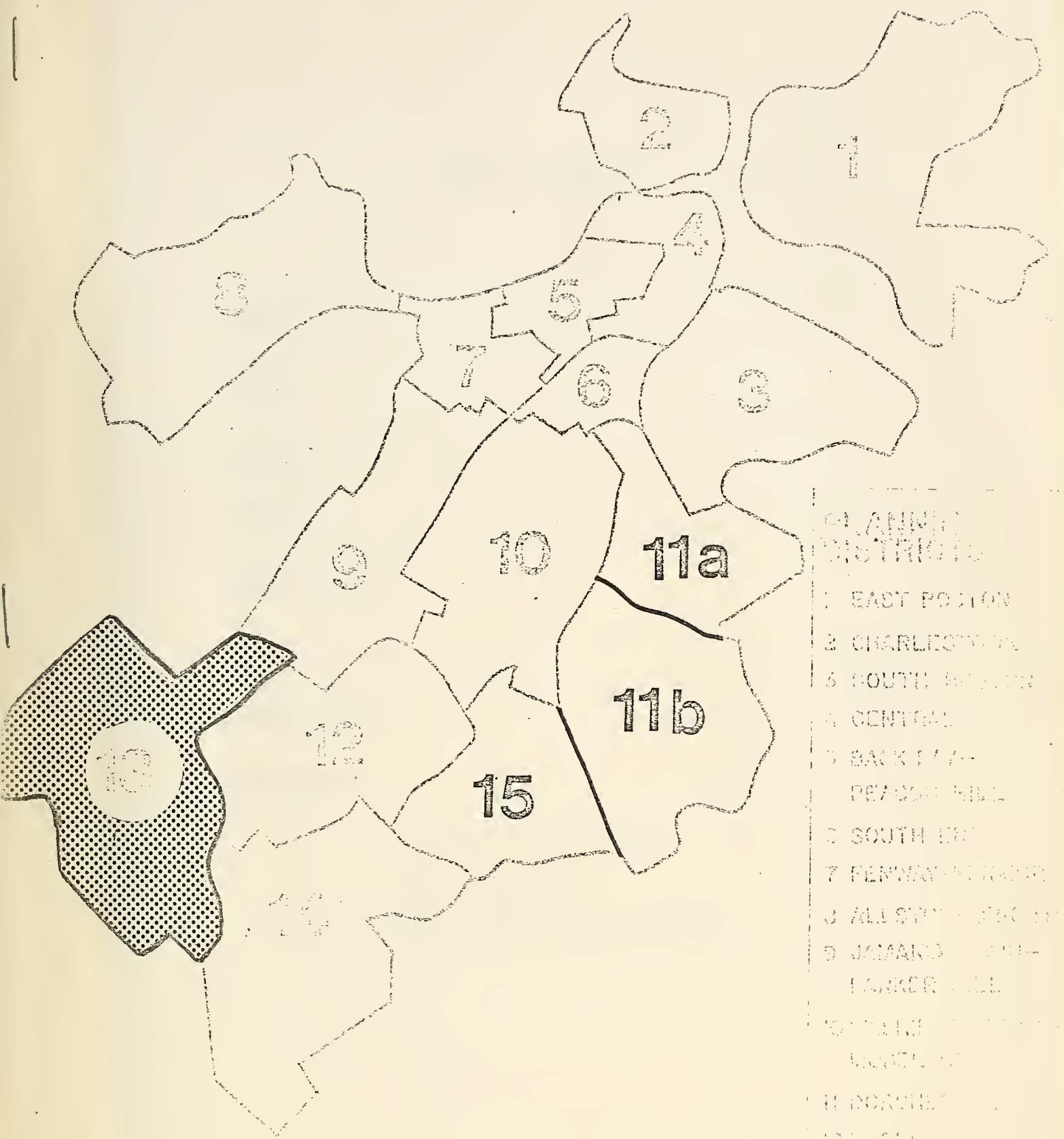
Planning Department

WEST ROXBURY District Planning Program



W. Roxbury  
B65R  
N





BOSTON DISTRICTS

- 1 EAST BOSTON
- 2 CHARLESSTOWN
- 3 SOUTH BOSTON
- 4 CENTRAL
- 5 BACK BAY
- 6 BEACON HILL
- 7 SOUTHBURY
- 8 PENNANT HILL
- 9 ALLSTON-BRIGHTON
- 10 JAMAICA PLAIN
- 11a
- 11b
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15 MATTAPAN-FRANKLIN



Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2011 with funding from  
Boston Public Library

<http://www.archive.org/details/preliminaryneigh00west>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY

POPULATION

HOUSING

COMMERCIAL AREAS

COMMUNITY GROUPS

PLANNING ISSUES

NEIGHBORHOODS

BELLEVUE HILL/LA GRANGE

BROOK FARM/PARKWAY

UPPER WASHINGTON/SPRING STREETS



## WEST ROXBURY

West Roxbury is suburban in character and contains a majority of single family homes with well-maintained yards. There are also a number of apartment buildings located in the district with a concentration along Washington Street and throughout the surrounding area. There are a number of new apartment complexes also found near the VFW Parkway, on Spring Street, and near LaGrange Street. The only mobile home park in the City of Boston is located off VFW Parkway in the southern part of the district.

The wholly residential character of the planning district has precluded large amounts of industrial development. The two main industrial land use areas are the quarry on Grove Street and the land fill dump off VFW Parkway. Few additional industrial uses are considered likely because of the proximity of remaining developable land to residential areas.

A large area of land along Sawmill Brook in the southwestern section of the district is wetland, serving as a flood plain for the Charles River. The wetlands have been encroached both by the land fill dump and by the major institutional use in the district - the cemeteries. Here five cemeteries, Mt. Benedict, St. Joseph's, Mt. Lebanon, Gethsemane, and Holyhood, occupy some 535 acres, of which only 50% is developed. A 179 acre portion of these cemeteries may be purchased by the MDC for passive recreation--if the bill which is pending passes the legislature this year.

### History

The area today known as West Roxbury was in its early years part of the Town of Roxbury, founded in 1630. In general, the district was wooded and rocky, with marshes along the Charles River. The flatlands were devoted primarily to farming. By the early 1800's the rudiments of West Roxbury Village had formed along Centre Street near Spring Street.

As a result of a conflict between the rural and the more developed parts of Roxbury, West Roxbury split off from Roxbury in 1851. The rural Town of West Roxbury included areas known today as Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and West Roxbury.

In the same year, the Needham Branch of railroad opened, bringing West Roxbury within easy commuting distance to Boston. Three stations served the area encompassed in the present day planning district. Small-scale entrepreneurs began building homes for the commuting middle classes in the vicinity of the rail line. The first wave of construction after the Civil War formed initial patterns of development. In 1874, West Roxbury was annexed to the City of Boston. During a second wave of home building from the mid-1880's to the 1890's, streets were laid out in about half the district.

### Population

Population in West Roxbury increased by 24% between 1960 and 1970 to 34,989. Most of this growth occurred in the newer sections, south of the Needham Branch Railroad, where one-family and apartment house construction took place.

1970's median family income for West Roxbury was the highest in the City, with the exception of the Back Bay-Beacon Hill planning district. This median \$12,285 was \$3152 above the City's median.



In 1970, West Roxbury had the highest percentage of persons over 65 of any community in Boston, although the lowest percentage of aged persons below the poverty level.

### Housing

The number of housing units in West Roxbury increased in the decade between 1960 and 1970, with growth occurring in the areas south of the Needham Branch Railroad. During the same period, total units in the City decreased by 3%.

The condition of housing is, for the most part, excellent with some structures in fair condition (in need of minor repairs) scattered throughout the area. In the few instances where these structures in need of repair are grouped together, they are located on or near major streets such as Washington Street and Spring-Centre Streets. There are almost no structures noted in poor condition (i.e., buildings in need of major repair) with the few observed located, in most instances, in the Washington Street area.

### Commercial Areas

The district's commercial areas are located along major streets and parkways and serve customers who come by car. The older main (120 store) commercial area along Centre Street between LaGrange and the West Roxbury Parkway is congested for this reason, but has generally maintained its vitality, though some deterioration exists at the fringes. The more recently built commercial enterprises along VFW Parkway include off-street parking areas.

Two older smaller commercial nodes at Grove and Washington Streets and along Spring Street seem to be suffering from the competition of nearby shopping centers at VFW Parkway and in Roslindale. It is adjacent to these two older commercial areas that most of the district's small amount of residential deterioration occurs.

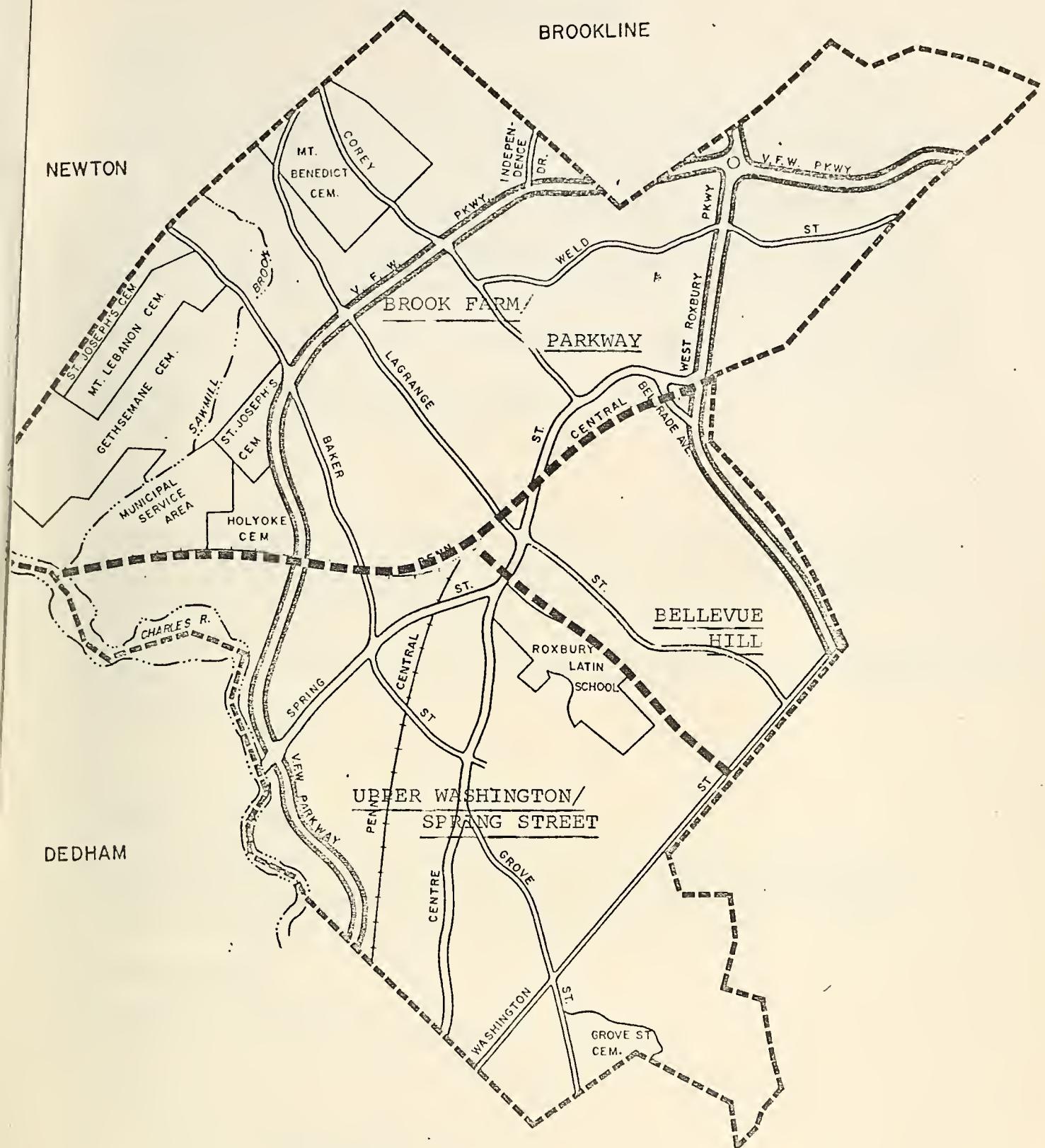
### Community Groups

West Roxbury Local Advisory Council  
West Roxbury Civic and Improvement Association  
Brook Farm Association

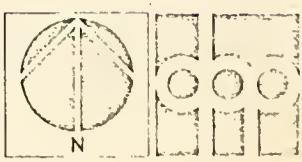
### Planning Issues

1. Need for Elderly Housing
2. Revitalization of the Centre Street Commercial Area
3. Phase Out of the City Dump
4. Apartment construction (location and design)
5. Proliferation of nursing home facilities along VFW Parkway
6. Preservation of remaining open land in the district
7. Reuse of the Pope Lumber site
8. Transit line extension along the Needham Branch Railroad to Needham





# WEST ROXBURY NEIGHBORHOODS DISTRICT PLANNING PROGRAM BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY





## BELLEVUE HILL/LAGRANGE

### Population

Located in the eastern portion of West Roxbury, Bellevue Hill is bounded by the West Roxbury Parkway, Washington Street, the West Roxbury Quarry and the Needham Branch Railroad. In 1970, Bellevue Hill had a population of 6210, an increase of 6% over 1960. Because this is an older section of the district, it experienced little growth in the last decade. The age characteristics for this area also reflects this older composition with a high proportion of elderly individuals (21%). Median family income for this area (\$13,220) exceeded the district-wide median of \$12,285 and only 7% of the families earned under \$5,000 annually.

Total 1970	% Change '60-'70	# Black '60	# Black '70	% Over 60	% 0-17
6210	+6%	0	20	21%	29%
<u>Med. Inc.</u>		<u>% Families Under 5,000</u>			
\$13,220		7%			

### Housing

Of the 1780 housing units recorded in 1970, only 85 (5%) needed fix-up in excess of \$1,000 each. Most of this need is in the area closest to the Centre Street commercial district. Over 85% of all structures in Bellevue Hill contain 1-2 family units and 96% are owner occupied.

Total D.U.'S	# Units Needing Over 1,000	% Owner Occ.	% Units in 1-2 Families
1780	85	96%	87%

### Abandoned Structures

-

### Commercial Areas

The Centre Street commercial area and the strip stores along Washington Street provides the major convenience goods and services to Bellevue Hill. Also a small shopping center with a supermarket and convenience goods stores is located on the northern edge of Bellevue Hill.

### Community Groups

Bellevue Hill Association  
West Roxbury Civic and Improvement Association

### Summary of Needs

1. Limited residential revitalization
2. Local Street improvements



## BROOK FARM/PARKWAY

### Population

The Brook Farm/Parkway area is located to the west of the Needham Branch Railroad and is bounded on its other sides by Newton and Brookline. In 1970, its population was 16,600, representing an increase of only 3% over 1960. Very little new construction has occurred in this area. The existing population is older and living in one-family homes, formerly containing many children who have since moved out to other areas. The number of blacks is negligible here as in all sections of West Roxbury with only 20 individuals counted in 1960. The median family income ranges from \$12,000 to \$13,010, slightly above the district wide median, and only 7% of the total families earn below \$5,000 annually.

Total 1970	% Change '60-'70	# Black '60	# Black '70	% Over 60
16,600	+3%	15	20	25%
% 0-17	Med. Inc.	% Families Under 5,000		
25%	\$13,010	7%		

### Housing

Of the 4880 housing units recorded in 1970, 55 (less than 1%) needed fix-up in excess of \$1,000 each. 92% of the houses in the sub-area are owner occupied and 89% contain 1-2 family units.

Total D.U.'s	# Units Needing Over 1,000	% Owner Occ.	% Units in 1-2 Families
4880	55	92%	89%

### Abandoned Structures

### Commercial Areas

Westbrook Village Shopping Center and the Centre Street commercial area are within the Brook Farm/Parkway area. Both adequately serve the residents, although Westbrook Village is considerably nicer. In addition, the VFW Shopping Center with a supermarket is located on the southern edge of the area and a new Star Market recently opened close to Spring and Grove Streets.

### Community Groups

Brook Farm Association  
West Roxbury Local Advisory Council

### Summary of Needs

1. Improved Parks
2. Street Improvements
3. Commercial Area revitalization - Centre Street



## UPPER WASHINGTON/SPRING STREETS

### Population

The Upper Washington/Spring Streets area is located in the southern portion of West Roxbury and is bounded by the Needham Branch Railroad, Newton, Needham, Dedham and Hyde Park. It is generally the most suburban of all of Boston's neighborhoods and contains some very attractive one-family streets. In 1970, its population was 12,600, an increase of 30% over 1960. Most of this growth was due to apartment construction in the Washington-Grove Street neighborhood.

The number of blacks is negligible (50 in 1970) and the age composition is consistent with district wide percentages. The median family income (\$11,440) is below the district median due to the large number of generally less affluent apartment residents, many of whom include young couples and the elderly. Only 8% of the total families earned under \$5,000 annually.

Total 1970	% Change '60-'70	# Black '60	# Black '70	% Over 60
12,600	+30%	20	50	19%
0-17	Med. Inc.	<u>% Families Under 5,000</u>		
27%	\$11,440	8%		

### Housing

Of the 4235 housing units counted in 1970, 105 (2%) needed fix-up in excess of \$1,000 each. Because of the high number of apartments, only 61% of the total units were in 1-2 family structures, although 94% of the structures were owner occupied. There is very little housing deterioration in this subarea, although limited pockets are found in the Washington-Grove Streets neighborhood.

Total D.U.'s	# Units Needing Over 1,000	% Owner Occ.	% Units in 1-2 Families
4235	105	94%	61%

### Abandoned Structures

### Commercial Areas

The Washington/Grove Streets commercial area serves the residents poorly, especially the apartment dwellers in this section of West Roxbury. The recently completed Star Market and Oscar Drug better serve the Spring/Centre Streets area.

### Community Groups

West Roxbury Civic and Improvement Association

### Summary of Needs

1. Limited residential revitalization in Washington/Grove Streets area.
2. Reuse plan for West Roxbury Quarry.
3. Open land retention in the Brook Farm area.
4. Limit growth along West Roxbury Parkway.
5. Local street improvements--many streets in this area are private, poorly maintained and unpaved.



	Brook Farm/ Parkway	Bellevue Hill/LaGrange	Upper Washington/ Spring St.	TOTAL
• TOTAL 1970 pop.	6210	12,600	16,600	34,989
• % CHANGE '60-'70	+6%	+30%	+3%	24%
• 1960 BLACK	0	20	15	35
• 1970 BLACK	20	50	20	90
• % over 60	21%	19%	25%	22%
• Median Family Income (\$)	\$13,220	\$11,440	\$12,000 13,110	\$12,285
• % Families under \$5,000	7%	8%	7%	8%
• Total Dwelling Units	1780	4235	4880	11026
• Units Needing over \$1,000	85	105	55	245
• Occupied	96%	94%	92%	94%
	87%	61%	89%	-
				Good- Excellent
				Good

B65R N

West Roxbury  
BRA. Plan. Dept. DPP.  
BRA. Neighborhood profile. Pre-  
Neig liminary.  
in